

Community-based methodologies for local food systems **A toolkit**



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<http://bit.ly/DawsonJA>

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The Dawson Food Justice and Sustainability

Research Hub (Dawson Food Justice Hub) is a team of researchers at Dawson College working towards a more resilient and equitable food system in the Montreal region, led by Anna-Liisa Aunio, faculty in the Sociology department at Dawson College and research fellow at the Loyola Sustainability Research Centre, Concordia University.

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Introduction

How can communities use research to develop more resilient and equitable food systems?

This is one of the key questions driving the work of the Dawson Food Justice and Sustainability Research Hub, or Dawson Food Justice Hub, a team of researchers at Dawson College, led by Anna-Liisa Aunio, a professor in environment at Dawson College and Concordia University, Montreal.

An important aspect of the Dawson Food Justice Hub's approach was to work with neighbourhood food organizations throughout Montreal. Neighbourhoods are often anchored in a sense of belonging to a place and community, and Montreal's neighbourhoods are extremely diverse. Consequently, the capacity for food security planning differs from one place to another—

be shared and adapted across neighbourhoods—and outside of Montreal, too.

To support neighbourhood groups in developing these tools, our team provided six small grants and accompaniment to community partners to revise, develop, adapt, or improve community-based methodologies. This report provides an overview of these methodologies in four neighbourhoods and two larger territories in Montreal. These neighbourhoods are LaSalle, Saint Laurent, Bordeaux-Cartierville, and Hochelaga-Maisonneuve. The two larger territories are Montreal West and Montreal East, representing 8 and 10 boroughs and townships, respectively.

The toolkit shows that communities are well-equipped to develop creative research methodologies and tools.

The Dawson Food Justice Hub specialises in community-based methodologies, which are **research methods developed in collaboration with and for the benefit of local communities** (see page 8 for a definition). Between 2016 and 2020, the Dawson Food Justice Hub received two consecutive grants to conduct applied research on food justice with community partners, using digital technologies, and through hosting events and educational workshops.

and the kind of research needed in each neighbourhood is not the same.

To support neighbourhood organisations in developing tools that could help them assess and work towards their food security, sovereignty, and sustainability goals, we were interested in crafting a flexible framework that could adapt to the capacities and planning processes of different neighbourhoods, in order to create relevant tools that could

The results from this project are rather diverse in their scope, the type of methodology being used, and the area of focus in the food system. **The tools developed by each of our community partners can be used and adapted by organisations and researchers.** The toolkit shows that communities are well-equipped to develop creative research methodologies and tools, which can also prove useful for addressing the problems many communities face beyond Montreal.

In this toolkit, we outline the six tools developed over the span of a two-year project.

For each case, we provide a brief background on the neighbourhood or territory and its community groups, describe the scope and relevance of the tool, and how it fits within a local food planning. In each case, we make the tools available for future use. Each of the tools highlighted in this toolkit address different components of the food system, including food access, food recovery, urban agriculture, food procurement, farming and distribution, and food systems coordination. Following a description of each tool, we highlight the lessons learned from the project. Because data collection is in many cases still ongoing, we focus our analysis on the design and applicability of the tool, though we do describe the findings where possible. Each case study features **practical tools for researchers and community groups interested in community-based methodologies and neighbourhood food planning.**

Before moving on, it can be helpful to explain briefly some of the Montreal context. The island of Montreal includes 16 municipalities, one of which is the City of Montreal, which can be subdivided into 19 boroughs. While there can be city-wide frameworks and guidelines, borough councils are responsible for funding community efforts, planning, so-

cial and economic development, and so on. Each borough is very different in terms of demographics, food access, infrastructure, and so on, with very unique histories and community sectors. In almost every borough, there is one or several “table de quartier” (the neighborhood “round table”) which manages and coordinates neighbourhood initia-

tives, including around food security, greening and leisure, and economic development. Our main community partners were thus the table de quartier in each neighbourhood, which we then supported in developing tools to gather knowledge and inform planning towards greater resilience and sustainability in the neighbourhood food system. ■

How to use this toolkit

What is the toolkit for? To inspire ideas for community-based methodologies for resilience and equity in local food systems, and to document successful interventions.

Who can use the toolkit? The toolkit is for community organizations, local government, researchers, and citizens.

Who made this toolkit? The toolkit was put together by the Dawson Food Justice Hub in collaboration with community groups throughout Montreal.

How do I use the toolkit? Read through the case studies to learn about the different strategies used by community groups in Montreal. All tools are uploaded in full online at <http://bit.ly/DawsonFJ>, and you are free to modify the tools for your own purposes.

Glossary

Local food systems Place-based and collaborative networks of food production and distribution, which can include, amongst others, food hubs, cooperatives, community-supported agriculture, community gardens, and community organizations.

Food desert An area that has limited access to fresh, affordable, and nutritious food.

Food swamp An area that has an oversupply of unhealthy food.

Geographic Information Systems Computer-based tools that allow us to conceptualize and understand spatial and geographic data, such as mapping available food spaces in an area.

Community food assessment A community-led analysis of the local food landscape, residents' perceptions of the food available to them,

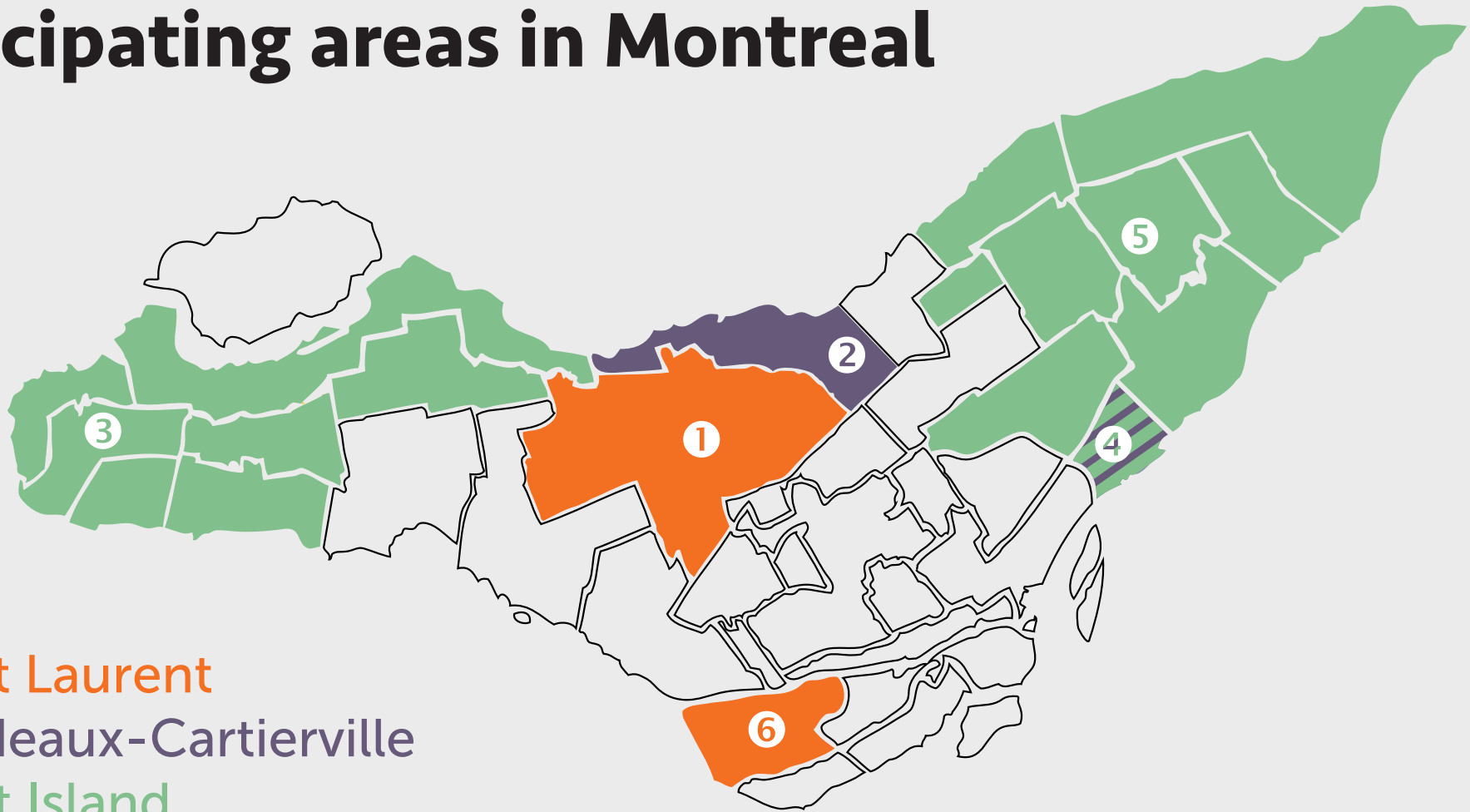
food shopping behaviors, barriers to or opportunities for a healthier food system, and identification of a community's needs—often designed to help advocacy and local food policy development.

Alternative and community-based food systems Local or global food systems that prioritize sustainability, ecological farming practices, reintegration of rural-urban communities, and community autonomy over food choices. ■



Photo by H  lo  se de Bertoli

Participating areas in Montreal



- ① Saint Laurent
- ② Bordeaux-Cartierville
- ③ West Island
- ④ Hochelaga-Maisonneuve
- ⑤ Eastern Montreal
- ⑥ LaSalle

- Borough
- Territory
- Neighbourhood

What are community-based methodologies?

Why do community-based research?

- Research can often not actually benefit the communities it is studying
- Giving space for the community to identify their own needs
- Empowering a community to better understand and address the issues they face
- Funneling academic resources to serve a community

Collaborative research can be generative, inspiring, and creative!

It's important to think about...

- Unequal power dynamics between the researcher and the community (e.g. who has funding, time, or benefits from institutional power).
- Long-term impacts of a project (e.g. after the project is over, who will be responsible to maintain it? What are the afterlives of the project?)
- Who do you define as the “community”? Who is included or excluded by that definition?
- Will the research be presented in a way that it is useful for the community?

Community-based methodologies involve, are led by, or support a local community

They could include:

- **Participatory research:** research undertaken in close collaboration with a community or group of people.
- **Community-based participatory research:** a specific set of methods and ethical guidelines for research that involves a community in all aspects of the research process.
- **Action research:** research designed for social, transformative change.
- **Community-led research:** research carried out or directed by a community.

All of these research methods overlap and more broadly aim at working with a community to achieve transformative, real-world change.

Community-based methods, food insecurity and the food system

Community-based methods are especially useful for addressing issues in the local food system. Because food shapes local identity and is a significant determinant of well-being, it can be very important for a local community and inspire collaboration and action. Many different collaborative methodological tools exist specific to studying food systems, some examples include: **community food assessments** (see page 6), **participatory mapping** of food spaces, and **photovoice** (i.e. when a group of people documents their food habits using photography and voice).

There are many great resources on assessing food security at the community level.¹ Throughout our initiative, we attempted to approach methodologies like food assessments from a participatory, bottom-up perspective, working with partner organizations to determine what information was important to them.

¹ See for example:

Just Food (2011). Where's the food? Finding out about food in your community. <http://bit.ly/DawsonFJ1>

Health Canada (2013). Measuring the food environment. <http://bit.ly/Dawson-FJ2>

What methodologies and tools were developed? **An overview**

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① Saint Laurent **Creating a protocol to measure food recovery and meal preparation**

Borough

Food recovery

Management

In Saint Laurent, the food security committee of the neighbourhood social planning council sought to coordinate its activities to recuperate unsold foods from a local greenhouse operation to prepare meals with them. The Dawson Food Justice Hub worked with the food waste coordinator and analysed what data needed to be collected at each step of the way. The coordinator built a spreadsheet with key indicators to measure food recovery, food loss and waste, food donated, and food that was ultimately processed.

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② Bourdeaux-Cartierville **Building a data collection plan for urban agriculture activities**

Neighbourhood

Urban agriculture

Management

A committee of the table de quartier of Bourdeaux-Cartierville launched an ambitious project with the mandate to grow food commercially. Over the course of several months, the partner developed a dashboard of what data to collect, when, by whom, with what means, and for what purpose. The dashboard helped merge funder-driven and community-driven indicators for three different types of urban agriculture activities: community gardens, collective gardens, and commercial gardens.

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③ West Island **Learning about commercial food production and distribution**

Territory

Food system

Survey

The West Island Community Resource Center (CRC) sought to raise awareness on food insecurity and became interested in creating more connections between community organizations, farmers and food distributors. In the context of this grant, our team worked with them to conduct a rapid food systems assessment. The CRC developed and executed a short questionnaire for farmers to assess their interest and capacity to increase food production and distribute it locally.

④ Hochelaga-Maisonneuve **Adapting a questionnaire on alternative food procurement**

Neighbourhood**Food procurement****Survey**

The food security committee of La Table de quartier Hochelaga-Maisonneuve sought to better understand what resources and infrastructures were available on its territory - including assets like kitchens, cold storage, and trucks - so that they could eventually be pooled and repurposed into a integrated community-based food system. A city-wide questionnaire, previously created for this purpose, was reviewed and vetted for the spatial scale and context of Hochelaga-Maisonneuve.

⑤ Eastern Montreal **Assessing the reach and relevance of an online mapping tool**

Territory**Food system****Survey****Mapping**

When the East Montreal Food Network was created, its first step was to generate an online map with a university partner to locate food businesses and community groups across 10 boroughs. The Dawson Food Justice Hub supported the network in assessing how frequently this map was used, by whom and for what reason, with the goal of improving it in the future. The network created the survey, collected responses and analyzed its results.

⑥ LaSalle **Engaging with food store-owners from culturally diverse communities**

Borough**Food retail****Survey****Mapping**

In LaSalle, the food security committee of the neighbourhood social planning council of LaSalle was interested in reaching out to culturally diverse communities by creating new relationships with store owners. To achieve this goal, the Dawson Food Justice Hub combined spatial analysis of socio-cultural and business data with the creation of an in-depth interview guide on workers' and store owners' perception of their clienteles.

1 Saint-Laurent Creating a protocol to measure food recovery and meal preparation

Borough

Food recovery

Management

Highlights

- To address poverty and food deserts, community groups in Saint-Laurent are working around a shared vision of an inclusive, sustainable, and solidarity-based food system.
- New food production and recovery initiatives needed to be streamlined and lacked data about their operations.
- A management tool was created to help collect data on the availability of food and what is being recovered.
- The tool could be useful for measuring and reducing food waste in a local context.
- This tool could help other groups to assess their own operations and highlight the breadth of their work.

Introduction

The borough of Saint Laurent is in the north part of Montreal. This multi-cultural territory is divided by four highways into smaller residential sectors and neighbourhoods in the east and industrial areas to the west.

The industrial scale infrastructure in the area also attracted a number of activities that relate to food security and urban agriculture, such as: the food donation terminal of Moisson Montreal, rooftop gardens (IGA Duchemin), commercial rooftop greenhouses (Lufa), and the more recent urban farming hub la Centrale agricole. Even so, food deserts persist in Saint-Laurent. Local organizations, such as Fondation la Fourmi Verte (The Green Ant Foundation), VertCité, la Coopérative de soli-

darité Les Serres du Dos Blanc, the Bon Courage community center and the YMCA Saint-Laurent are now working around a shared vision of an inclusive, sustainable and solidarity-based food system called Comité Nourrir Saint-Laurent, an instance of the food security committee of the neighbourhood roundtable, the Comité des organismes sociaux de Saint Laurent.¹

New production (Serres du Dos Blanc) and food recovery (Fondation la Fourmi Verte) activities, led by the members of the comité-Nourrir Saint-Laurent, were launched to seek ways of increasing their food recovery and processing capacity. The main strategy iden-

¹ <https://www.cossl.org/comite-securite-alimentaire> [page is no longer updated], <https://www.nourrirsaintlaurent.com/>

tified in this early stage is to process unsold agricultural products from the greenhouse as canned goods or prepared meals. In 2020, the goal of the Nourrir Saint-Laurent was to recuperate 2,000 kilograms (4,400 pounds).

The Dawson Food Justice Hub worked with Le Comité Nourrir Saint-Laurent. The committee was supported financially, through feedback and an orientation session with a food waste expert and advocate. This collaboration led to the creation of a tool that tracks the amounts of food that are collected and processed.

Food recovery and transformation tool

There are two main goals that drove the development of the tool by Nourrir Saint-Laurent. The first goal was to generate a pilot assessment in order to better estimate realistic goals for the following year. The second goal was to consolidate the food recovery and processing activities. Logistics and communication between organizations involved in these operations require clear, simple guidelines and data collection methods.

The final tool is in an Excel spreadsheet format. It is meant to be used by community

“This protocol will allow us to quantify our food waste reduction efforts. It will also have a positive impact on food insecurity in our neighbourhood. In the future, we will use the data generated by the tool as indicators to set food waste reduction objectives.”

-Catherine Cyr
*Comité des Organismes Sociaux
de Saint-Laurent*



workers responsible for food recovery and food processing. Data is inserted to quantify food at three steps of the way : (1) the arrival of recuperated food, (2) possible re-donations², and (3) food transformation. The data is entered by staff and those responsible at the kitchen, which is then analysed by the food system coordinator.

The first sheet of this tool includes instructions and a Frequently Asked Questions section to guide the user, and additional details were en-

² When receiving food from the store, community workers decide whether to send it to the kitchen or give it to other community groups. They then have to keep track of whatever was given away or kept.

tered into each column title to describe measurement units and what data needed to be collected. Staff and volunteers are also able to indicate how many hours were invested in a given shift of work. The tool can generate reports on the quantities and estimates of the economic value of the food being recovered, re-donated, and/or processed.

In order to build this tool, a set of standardized measurements were created: (1) a weighting protocol, (2) a conversion table to evaluate the market value of transformed food (3) a standard set of recipes. Once the data is inputted, these standardized measurements

can automatically convert and present information.

To create an appropriate measurement tool, the community researcher needed to define food waste. Current studies aimed at quantifying food loss define it according to whether the loss was avoidable or not, and whether the edible or inedible parts of the food are discarded. In order to simplify the process, food was considered lost if its appearance is

too degraded to be safely consumed or processed. In addition, parts of foods that are generally not cooked, despite being edible, were added to the food loss category (ex: potato peels, carrot tops, etc.).

A second aspect of this project was how to categorize food items. Currently, the project is only recovering food from a community greenhouse, which means that the first version of the tool is limited to types of

fresh produce available in this greenhouse (tomatoes, basil, peppers, etc.). However, this list could be extended to a more complete list of food items, in which case the retail price and units of sales would also need to be included. In that regard, the MAPAQ list of retail food items is a useful and complete resource.

Clockwise from top left to bottom left: Coopérative de solidarité Les Serres du dos Blanc, food transformation at the YMCA Saint-Laurent, and sale of transformed food at the Cultures Urbaines food market.

Photos by Issiaka Sanou, Andrew Liberio, and AlexSandra Fournier



Discussion

This project supported the Nourrir Saint-Laurent initiative to create a measurement tool for its pilot year. As a multi-stakeholder initiative, it was important to aggregate information from both production and kitchen facilities and create clear weighting protocols to minimize errors. In the future, the community researcher will be training colleagues in order to understand why, how, and when to use this tool.

This tool could be useful for collective kitchens, soup kitchens and food banks who receive and distribute donated food on a regular basis. This tool can help these groups who don't already collect data to improve on their operations, and specifically how much food they recuperate, cook and throw out. For those who do already collect some information, they can compare their existing tools with the one made available here. This information can in turn help communities review their work annually, set realistic targets for the future and communicate their impact to funders. ■

Find out more

MAPAQ list of retail food items (French only)

Do you need to categorize or define food items? This government resource provides definitions of the types of retail outlets and a typology of store-bought food items, including processed foods.

<http://bit.ly/DawsonFJ3>

Why and how to measure food loss and waste

This report of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation explains the methods for measuring food loss, and how they are applicable to different stages of food service.

<http://bit.ly/DawsonFJ4>

Analyse du gaspillage alimentaire à Montréal : études de cas dans les secteurs commercial et industriel (Analysis of food waste in Montreal: Case studies of commercial and industrial sectors [French only])

<http://bit.ly/DawsonFJ7>

Le gaspillage alimentaire entre la distribution au détail et la consommation (Food waste between retail distribution and consumption [French only])

The Research Chair on Ecological Transitions' report defines three categories of personal profiles when it comes to consumption practices, and proposes practical solutions to reduce food waste where consumers access food at the point of sale.

<http://bit.ly/DawsonFJ6>

Food loss and waste value calculator

Quickly estimate the value of food loss and waste in terms of nutritional and environmental impacts

<https://flwprotocol.org/why-measure/food-loss-and-waste-value-calculator/#>

② **Bordeaux-Cartierville** Building a data collection plan for urban agriculture activities

Neighbourhood

Urban agriculture

Management

Highlights

- Several commercial and community-run urban agriculture initiatives have recently been created in Bordeaux-Cartierville.
- The network sought to create a set of indicators and data collection mechanisms to better understand their activities across the neighborhood.
- Existing tools were adapted and simplified for their context, resulting in a more functional tool for diverse users.
- The tool will help communication between community workers and facilitate urban agriculture efforts in the neighbourhood.
- The tool could be adapted by other community food networks to better understand the scope and reach of urban agriculture activities on their territory.

Introduction

The neighbourhood of Bordeaux-Cartierville is located in the western part of the Ahuntsic-Cartierville borough, just north of the Saint-Laurent district. The sector of Laurentien/Grenet was identified as being a development and renewal priority by the municipality.

The Conseil local des intervenants communautaires (CLIC) was created in 1991. Since then, a food security table, the Système alimentaire local, saine alimentation et sécurité alimentaire (Local food system, healthy food, and food security; SALSA),¹ was formed to address food insecurity in the neighbourhood and to federate community-based initiatives, such as the seasonal and mobile Marché Ahuntsic-Cartierville (MAC), the Ecoquartier Ville en Vert, la Maison des parents, and Corbeille Bordeaux-Cartier-

ville, a community food hub and social reinsertion enterprise. The SALSA committee has adopted a vision of a sustainable and community-based food system.

One of the committee's priorities is to expand urban agriculture with the aim of improving access to food for low-income households. The project Fourche et Fouchette involved the creation of a 650 square meter garden for commercial-scale urban agriculture activities. To support this initiative, SALSA was looking to create a set of indicators and data collection mechanisms. The Dawson Food Justice Hub provided financial aid and met with the community researchers four times to support the development of a neighbourhood-wide urban agriculture dashboard.

¹ <http://www.clic-bc.ca/clic/tables-concertation/securite-alimentaire/>

“The Urban Agriculture team grows every year, especially in the summer with seasonal jobs. Data is handled in different places and at different times. The work achieved by this project will facilitate better data management.”

-Héloïse de Bertoli
Ville en Vert



Data collection tool for urban agriculture

The goal of this participatory research project was to generate a unified set of guidelines to collect data and generate urban agriculture indicators, as well as identifying who was responsible for their collection in the neighborhood. Initially aimed at commercial production, the tool was expanded to also

include community and collective gardens in the neighbourhood.

In Bordeaux-Cartierville, the community researcher identified 7 community gardens, 3 collective gardens, and 2 commercial gardens. However, due to uncertainty with regards to future funding, it was unclear whether collective gardens would remain functional from one year to the next.

In order to systematically identify relevant indicators, the community researcher ag-

gregated existing indicators, initially developed by Cultiver Montréal, and used a scoping analysis created by Toronto Urban Growers.² However, the community partner realized this involved too many indicators. Based on SMART data collection principles, they narrowed 63 indicators down to the 14 to be most useful for their context.

The final tool was presented in an Excel spreadsheet format. The list of indicators are

² For the original indicators developed by Cultiver Montréal, see <http://bit.ly/DawsonFJ8>

matched with one, two or all three types of gardens: productive, community, and collective gardens, so that the indicators could be applicable to the different goals and management models of each type of garden. Each indicator is also associated with a staff position responsible for data collection.

Discussion

During the initial scoping phase, the community researcher grappled with which indicators to include and to exclude. For example, economic indicators were considered most relevant for the productive gardens. Interestingly, these filters meant excluding many of the environmental indicators, which were not considered an immediate priority. It was also a challenge to properly reflect the reach of activities from an anti-poverty and social inclusion standpoint. While it is important to better understand the socio-demographic profile of participants, this information was considered intrusive and could possibly deter participants from joining in future activities.

A second important component of the project was aggregating existing tools into a shared framework. While some tools existed, others didn't or would need to be improved. The pro-

cess encouraged conversations between community organizers, which resulted in greater acknowledgment that other groups were already using their own tracking methods and thus helped in avoiding replication. The community researcher also recommended to her team to go paperless and input harvest data digitally.

This tool could be useful for groups who coordinate gardening and urban farming initiatives that involve multiple sites and people. This tool can help groups start a conversation on data collection in urban agriculture about which indicators matter the most and who is responsible in collecting them. Groups can use and adapt this tool and create a unified framework for their neighborhood or township. The data collected will help those who need it to review their work on a yearly-basis, set realistic targets for the future and communicate their impact to funders. ■

Clockwise from top right to bottom left: a collective garden, Fourche et Fourchette, a for-profit productive garden, and a community garden. Photos by
Héloïse de Bortoli



Find out more

Portrait of Bordeaux-Cartierville

<http://pic.centraide.org/en/bordeaux-cartierville/>

Portrait sociodémographique du secteur de RUI de Bordeaux-Cartierville (Socio-demographic portrait of the RUI sector of Bordeaux-Cartierville [French only])

A sociodemographic analysis draws on population-wide data on things like gender and age, country of origin and language, education level, median income and unemployment. When transposed onto maps, this information can reveal spatial inequities.

<http://bit.ly/DawsonFJ9>

Bordeaux-Cartierville Food-Related Services and Activities Map

Looking for ideas of informing your community with the food-related services and activities ? The Conseil local des intervenants communautaires created its own map in web and print form.

<http://bit.ly/DawsonFJ10>

Chantier des agricultures montréalaises (Work-space for agriculture in Montreal [French only])

Indicators can help demonstrate the positive impacts of urban agriculture, whether they are related to education, production or sales. Learn about the experience of community groups in Montreal and how they assess what indicators are relevant and which ones might be too time-consuming to collect.

<http://archives2019.lesjardins.alternatives.ca/lesjardins.alternatives.ca/ressources/table-dinno-ovation.html>

Indicators for Urban Agriculture in Toronto: A Scoping Analysis

Toronto Urban Growers wanted to make a strong case for investing more resources into urban agriculture and developing enabling policies, so it assessed and organized indicators based on their time-frame and scope of application.

<http://bit.ly/DawsonFJ11>

Politique en Agriculture Urbaine (Urban Agriculture Policy [French only])

The borough of Rivière-des-Prairies-Pointe-aux-Trembles worked with local groups to shape its first urban agriculture policy. They designed a survey of 30 questions meant for the general public to help guide the creation of an ambitious vision for urban agriculture in the borough.

<http://bit.ly/DawsonFJ12>

Carrefour de recherche d'expertise et de transfert en agriculture urbaine (Research, Expertise and Knowledge Transfer Hub in Urban Agriculture [French only])

Urban agriculture can be profitable and generate meaningful employment opportunities. Learn more about business models and the economic impacts of urban agriculture in Quebec by visiting the website of the Carrefour de recherche d'expertise et de transfert en agriculture urbaine.

<http://cretau.ca/index.php/ressources/publications/>

Outil diagnostique de l'action en partenariat (Assessment tool for multi-stakeholder partnerships [French only])

Developed by the Chaire approches communautaires et inégalités de santé, this questionnaire assesses multi-stakeholder partnerships based on six criteria for success. This tool, designed on the principles of actor-network theory, is a good reference for those working at the intersection of community organizations, philanthropic foundations and governments.

<http://bit.ly/DawsonFJ13>

③ **West Island** Learning about commercial food production and distribution

Territory

Food system

Survey

Highlights

- This large territory consists of low-density suburbia interspersed with farmland and pockets of poverty.
- Local groups wanted to understand how food is grown in the West Island, how it is transported and sold to West Island grocery stores and consumers, and how this food is disposed of.
- Existing surveys were adapted into an interview guide to better fit a local context, where businesses and organizations had little time or capacity to respond to lengthy questionnaires.
- The tool gave community partners a better picture of their food system.
- This survey could be useful for any organization to get a better understanding of the gaps and potential for intervention.

Introduction

The West Island covers a large area that includes eight separate municipalities and two boroughs, whose borders are loosely separated by the North-South H13 highway. This territory is largely a lower density, single-family home, suburban environment that has historically been considered more English-speaking and wealthy than other parts of the city. However, as highlighted by community organizations, sparse pockets of poverty and inequality persist, especially in areas with more recent immigrant families. With a food system that is largely dominated by large-scale food outlets, economic and geographic access to local services by foot or public transport is a persistent challenge.

One specificity of the West Island is that it is

home to the few agricultural lands left on the island, as well as a vibrant farmers' market. These farmlands are host to a small number of significant farming operations, including philanthropic or socially oriented projects such as the Ferme D-3-Pierres and the Santropol Farm. The gardening and farming community is well established and extends to parts of Montérégie West in Vaudreuil-Hudson and Salaberry-Les Cèdres. Land use planning efforts on the Island, however, have highlighted the challenges of increasing access to farmland while preserving natural landscapes and biodiversity in the face of real estate development.¹ In recent years, climate change has also been increasingly felt in

¹ See for example Pouvoir Nourrir, Pouvoir Grandir (2019). Accès simplifié au foncier pour le développement de l'agriculture en zone périurbaine. (Simplified land access for agricultural development in periurban areas. [French only]) <http://bit.ly/DawsonFJ14>

“The [Dawson Food Justice Hub] has spent a large amount of time orienting the CRC in the right direction, and providing a wealth of information and resources in order to better construct a picture of our food system.”

-West Island Community Resource Center



the form of hazardous and destructive flooding.

On the social planning front, the north and south sectors of West Island have historically been managed by different concertations, or community roundtables. The Table de Quartier Nord de l'Ouest-de-l'Île dissolved in 2019 and remains inactive. Furthermore, since 2016, food security planning efforts have been spearheaded by the Community Resource Centre (CRC) and the Table de Sud de l'Ouest de l'Île (TQSOI). The West Island was also thought of as an important place to begin a partnership to generate more research and knowledge in an

area that is not covered in the literature on food security in Montreal.

As part of movement-building exercise, the CRC and its partners collected a series of testimonies and orchestrated a campaign to raise awareness about poverty and food insecurity. Several public assemblies were organised to build momentum and projects with a wide range of actors. One example in food security programming is the Corbeille de Pain in Pointe-Claire, which now also operates a solidarity market in Pierrefonds in collaboration with the municipality. Increasing local

food procurement meant equipping community groups with a better understanding of food flows, including both global/conventional and local/sustainable food systems. In the context of the mini-grants, the CRC proposed to do a quick series of interviews with food suppliers, which includes both farms and distributors. The Dawson Food Justice Hub provided financial aid and met with the community researchers on four occasions.

Assessment of Opportunities with Food Suppliers

The goal of the internal food system assessment by the CRC West Island was to understand how food is grown in the West Island, and whether it is transported and sold to West Island grocery stores and consumers, and how this food is disposed of. In doing so, the CRC hoped to identify points of intervention in the food system that may serve as the basis for future solutions to food insecurity.

The main tool included two, short interview guides to food producers (11 questions) and food distributors (4 questions). The questionnaires were narrowed down and shortened to adjust for the lack of time and availability these kinds of food businesses had. There were very few studies on food systems specific to the West Island, and food distribution more broadly, to rely on. Therefore, the community researcher had to rely on more regional provincial documents and examples of producer surveys in France and the United States to focus on the more relevant themes and questions.

Several lists had to be aggregated in order to make the sampling of interviewees possible.

The Dawson Food Justice Hub communicated its database listing food businesses, including distributors, retailers and processors, to the CRC West Island. This updated and verified list of food retail and distribution establishments provides an overview of larger chains and independent food businesses, as well as specialty and ethnic food stores in the West Island. A request was also made to access the database of Moisson Montreal, which lists community food services, and which was quickly granted. However, no exhaustive database on food producers in the area, and in Montérégie Ouest, was available. A list of 14 farms was nevertheless collected based on the sparse information available.

The final assessment is divided into three sections: (1) food production, (2) food distribution and sale, and (3) waste management. This assessment does not include an analysis of existing sources of food going towards the community aid sector and focuses instead on commercial, seasonal, fruit and vegetable supply chains. Emphasis was put on food distributors because of their important, under-solicited role as intermediaries in regional food systems governance.¹ In interviews with

farmers, topics prioritized included marketing channels, delivery and transport, overall production capacity, management of unsold foods, and level of interest in working with community food groups were prioritized.

The community-based research project also involved reaching out to food distributors operating in the West Island and within Montreal, as well as corporate grocery store chains. The CRC was interested in learning more about the distribution routes of distributors, whether or not their delivery vehicles were at capacity, as well as their level of interest in partnering with local food organizations. For grocery store chains, the CRC was interested in learning more about methods for dealing with food waste, including whether or not these stores were partnered with any local food security organizations.

¹ Billon, C., Baritoux, V., Lardon, S. & Loudiyi, S. (2016) Les acteurs de la distribution. Quel rôle dans la gouvernance alimentaire territoriale? In: P. Mundler & J. Rouchier (Eds). *Alimentation et proximités. Jeux d'acteurs et territoires* (345-364). Dijon: Educagri éditions, Collections Transversales.

**Dominant foodscape in
West Island includes large
supermarkets, mostly
accessible by car. Photos by
Anuska Martins**



Discussion

One of the persistent challenges in rebuilding local, sustainable food supply chains is the price differential and marketing gap between local organic farms on the one hand and the food aid network on the other. While community food services seek wholesale prices, local farms rely on the premium on farm-fresh, high quality produce. It was not surprising that almost all of the 10 farms interviewed offer their produce for sale at farmer's markets, on-site at farm stands or delivery baskets at pick up locations. The research confirmed local farms rarely seek wholesale food distribution. One farmer mentioned that his farm had since stopped doing business with wholesalers due to a lack of shared benefits of these business transactions. That farmer, and others who do not sell to wholesalers, have found that direct sales to consumers is more profitable and efficient for their purposes.

The research also shed light on the capacity of local farms. In most cases, interviewees indicated that their land use, their production and vehicles were all at capacity. Some smaller farms mentioned that they did not have enough money to hire staff, but that they could use more labour from the community during harvest. In terms of surplus management, all farms surveyed indicated that they went

to great lengths in order to limit the amount of food waste they produce. Interestingly, the vast majority of farms were already engaged in some form of charitable partnership with food banks in Montreal, or its surrounding areas. Some organizations mentioned were: Moisson Sud-Ouest, Bread Basket, NDG Food Depot, and a variety of other food banks in Lachine, Vaudreuil, and Valleyfield.

Engaging with food distributors was a greater challenge than interviewing farmers. All distributors either declined to answer questions, or did not respond to requests for comment. The management of larger grocery chains also did not respond to the community researcher's questions, and when they did, re-directed the requests to the corporate offices of their store outside the West Island. The lack of response led to community workers strategizing how to more effectively reach out to food businesses. Using the compilations of food businesses it gathered, the CRC asked Moisson Montréal if any of the stores listed were currently donors of the organization. Moisson Montréal responded that none of the stores listed were donors, but that they would be interested in accepting new partners in the West Island. Therefore, the community sector may consider facilitating a dialogue between independent food retailers and Moisson Montréal. It may also find it useful to approach smaller retailers themselves, in order to limit

the amount of transportation and logistics involved in getting food to charitable groups

This tool can be used by community food hubs, farmer's markets and neighborhood networks as a prompt for the food suppliers in their area. The short interview guide can help organizations and community workers gain a better understanding of the management and operations of food producers and distributors in their region, and assess whether the volumes and supply routes coincide with community groups' needs. ■

Find out more

Hidden Hunger Documentary

What communication tools are available to raise awareness about food insecurity in the community? The CRC West Island made a 9:24 min documentary called Hidden Hunger to change public opinion and inform municipal councillors.

<https://tqsoi.org/hidden-hunger-documentary/>

Métaportrait des publications portant sur la sécurité alimentaire à montréal depuis 2006 (Meta-analysis of the literature on food security in Montreal since 2006 [French only])

Inspired by the example of Victoria, BC, the Faim Zero initiative conducted a state of knowledge on food security in Montreal, showcasing the research done and the network of actors in the field.

<http://bit.ly/DawsonFJ15>

Le territoire et les activités agricoles dans le Grand Montréal (Agricultural activities and territory in the Greater Montreal [French only])

Provinces and the federal government administer agricultural data. This data is relevant to understand land ownership and land use at a metropolitan scale.

<http://bit.ly/DawsonFJ16>

City Region Food Systems Toolkit

The Food for Cities Toolkit provides guidance on how to assess and build sustainable city region food systems. It includes support material to define, map, analyze and engage stakeholders and policy-makers.

<http://www.fao.org/in-action/food-for-cities-programme/toolkit/introduction/en/>

④ Hochelaga-Maisonneuve Creating local synergies for community food procurement

Neighbourhood

Food procurement

Survey

Highlights

- Hochelaga-Maisonneuve is historically a working-class neighbourhood with an established community network.
- To address food insecurity and align initiatives, the community partner wanted to create an inventory of existing infrastructures managed by the community sector: kitchens, trucks, storage.
- In this case, the roundtable reviewed and vetted an existing survey.
- The project will help to get a sense of the many emerging initiatives and their assets in the neighborhood .
- The questionnaire could be used by any network that wishes to do an inventory of their resources and aims to streamline services to the community and improve collaboration between groups.

Introduction

Hochelaga-Maisonneuve is one of the oldest neighbourhoods in Montreal. Located in the centre-east of the city, its dense social fabric and rising unemployment following the closure of manufacturing industries in the 1980s made the neighbourhood a fertile ground for social activism, self-organized residents' groups, and a well-established community sector. Today, the gentrification of the neighbourhood is well underway, attracting younger families, but also pushing long-term, low-income households out of the housing market.

The neighbourhood is home to multiple community initiatives focusing on food security and social housing. The first collective kitchen in Quebec (which now numbers in the

hundreds across the province) was formed by three women from the neighbourhood in 1982. Chic Resto Pop is another well-known community restaurant, serving low-income people and providing meals to local schools. As one of the most active coalitions formed around a specific issue, the food security committee had significant influence in the creation and governance of the neighbourhood social council, La Table de quartier Hochelaga-Maisonneuve (LTQHM).

A recent social planning assessment of the neighbourhood indicates that geographic and economic access to food is a challenge for the 28.7% of the population that is low-income.¹

¹ La Table de quartier Hochelaga-Maisonneuve (2019). Portrait de quartier Hochelaga-Maisonneuve 2019. [Portrait of Hochelaga-Maisonneuve borough 2019 (French only)] <http://bit.ly/DawsonFJ17>

In addition, retail and community options are concentrated on the commercial street, rue Ontario Est. Urban agriculture initiatives are present throughout the neighbourhood.

Adapting a questionnaire on alternative food procurement

The Food Committee of LTQHM has a comprehensive food security plan for the neighbourhood to improve food access for low-income households. The plan aims to consolidate a community-based food system by increasing the capacities, skills, and knowledge of community workers of existing services and resources and building new partnerships across organizations. In the end, the LTQHM hopes to build the capacity of its member organizations to create a network that pools together either its purchasing power or its logical infrastructure.

To work toward this goal, LTQHM received support from the Dawson Food Justice Hub to develop a questionnaire of food providers and services. The questionnaire was adapted from one created by the Conseil de l'Industrie

“All of this knowledge will allow us to better align ourselves with the projects that are emerging in eastern Montreal.”

-La Table de quartier Hochelaga-Maisonneuve

Bioalimentaire de L'Île de Montréal (CIBIM) in 2018, which was a city-wide survey of the island of Montreal, but which, collected too few responses specific for Hochelaga-Maisonneuve. The questionnaire compiles 25 questions that are divided into 4 broad sections. The sections are : (1) general information on the organization, (2) procurement and food supply, (3) kitchen equipment, transport and storage, and (4) cooperation across multiple organizations.

Overall, the questionnaire aims to create an initial inventory of logistical assets - kitchen, trucks, and different types of storage. This inventory is meant to provide an overview of local infrastructure and assess whether they are being used at their fullest capacity. In the case that these are not being used to their full potential, LTQHM could match these with

organizations that need them.

Furthermore, the survey helps to identify whether organizations have similar values driving their choices in food procurement (ex : price vs. local food). The questionnaire also inquires to what degree a given organization dedicates time and resources to food procurement and food security programming, and their general interest of working together to pool purchasing power and supply chain logistics with other organizations in Hochelaga-Maisonneuve and, more broadly, adjacent neighbourhoods in the East end of Montreal.

Discussion

Given the complexities associated with food procurement and previous experiences in other neighbourhoods and at the city-level, the



Clockwise from top right to bottom left: the kitchen of the Chic Resto Pop, the kitchen of the CAP St-Barnabé, the P'tit Marché Barnabé in different locations, the market of the Chic Resto Pop, and the collective garden Jardin Barnabé. Photos by Michel Roy



Hochelaga-Maisonneuve roundtable opted for a methodology that was building on previous iterations. The revision and vetting of the questionnaire conducted by the CIBIM would provide several benefits locally. First, it could be distributed to a greater number of organizations on its territory, but also to launch a process whereby local organizations that had not participated in city-wide dialogues on the issue would be involved. This was considered as a key element to enhance local cohesion around a common vision at the neighbourhood level.

In a subsequent phase, LTQHM will seek to know more about the service beneficiaries of each organization working in the field of food security but also of all groups whose specific mission indirectly contribute to the food security of their members and users without it being an explicit mandate of the organization.

The questionnaire can be used by city-wide and neighborhood food security networks, neighborhood and their member organizations. The tool, which focuses on purchasing and distribution, can help community workers create an inventory of current resources, infrastructures and needs. This information can in turn start a conversation between community groups with similar priorities on how resources and operations can be streamlined. ■

Find out more

Pratiques, intérêts et défis de l'approvisionnement alimentaire (Practices, interests, and challenges of food provision [French only])

In this publication, the Chaire de recherche sur la transition écologique (Research Chair on Ecological Transitions) provides an overview of several attempts to pool resources and purchasing power among community food initiatives and social enterprises.

<http://bit.ly/DawsonFJ18>

La production des effets de l'action intersectorielle locale sur les milieux de vie (The production of local intersectorial initiatives' effects on living environments [French only])

How can the implications of local intersectorial dynamics on living environments be assessed? The Canada Research Chair Community Approaches and Health Inequalities [Approches communautaires et inégalités de santé - CACIS] addressed this question in Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, Center-South and Rivière-des-Prairies boroughs.

<http://bit.ly/DawsonFJ19>

Surveys on food-related services, Rosemont (French only)

In the neighbourhood of Rosemont, the local food security coalition conducted 593 in-person

surveys in 2012 and 2018 with end-users of food-related services (food banks, collective kitchen, meals on wheels, etc). Information collected in this eighteen-question survey highlighted inequities in a gentrifying neighbourhood.

<http://bit.ly/DawsonFJ20>

Interactive Food Security Maps in Canada

There are different ways to create interactive, on-line maps, and it is recommended to scope what is already out there before launching a new project. Take a look at the experience of two cities, one province, and northern territories. Répertoire des organismes offrant des services en alimentation, Carrefour alimentaire Centre-Sud <http://www.carrefouralimentaire.org/repertoire/>

Food by Ward, Toronto Food Policy Council-
<https://tfpc.to/food-by-ward>

Winnipeg Food Atlas, Manitoba Collaborative Data Portal <https://mangomap.com/cgreenwpg/maps/a779131e-2d80-11ea-9e83-06765ea3034e/winnipeg-food-atlas>

Food Programs Map, Food For All New Brunswick <https://foodforallnb.ca/foodmap>
Food System Inventory Map, Arctic Institute for Community-Based Research <https://www.aicbr.ca/food-systems-map>

Répertoire des organismes offrant des services en alimentation, Carrefour alimentaire Centre-Sud <http://www.carrefouralimentaire.org/repertoire/>

⑤ **Eastern Montreal** Assessing the reach and relevance of an online mapping tool in the East end

Territory

Food system

Survey

Mapping

Highlights

- The east end of Montreal is diverse and industrialized, has a high prevalence of poverty, and poor access to food and mobility.
- The Réseau alimentaire de L'Est was created to address the need for greater communication and coordination between community groups working on food issues.
- An online map was created to identify all food organizations operating in the territory.
- The Réseau alimentaire de L'Est worked with the Dawson Food Justice Hub to survey users of the map.
- It was found that the map is mostly being used by community organizations.
- The survey would be useful for any group wishing to assess the use of an online map.

Introduction

The food action network Réseau alimentaire de l'Est spans ten boroughs in the far north-east and east section of the island. A number of health-risk factors, such as a higher prevalence of food deserts and food swamps, limited public transit, as well as air and ground pollution associated with industrial activity, are unevenly spread throughout the territory. The risk factors map on to higher levels of socio-economic disparities and unhealthy eating lifestyles.¹

The East of Montreal also has some important food system infrastructures and community

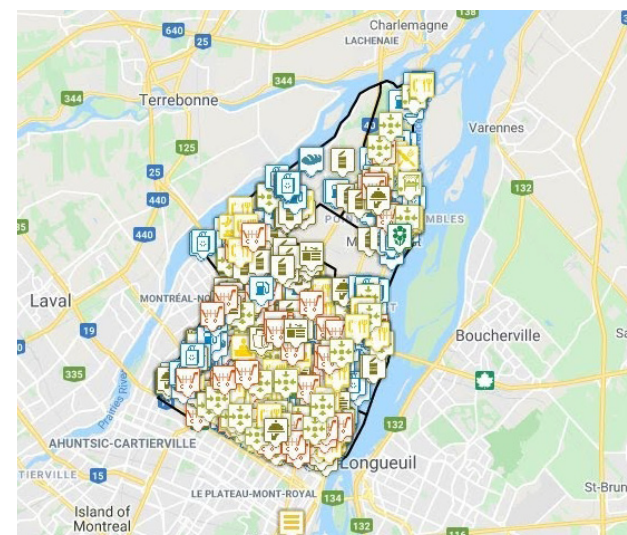
networks. This territory comprises a large number of small, medium, and large food logistics and processing businesses, around which new food recovery initiatives are forming. It remains to be seen whether the recent relocation of Montreal's main food terminal to Saint-Michel will facilitate food flows in the area. Another aspect of the territory is that large tracts of underused land are increasingly being considered for urban agriculture activities. Different boroughs like Pointe-aux-Trembles and Rivière-des-Prairies are implementing bold action plans in urban agriculture.

The relatively recent creation of the Réseau alimentaire de l'Est came with a growing recognition of the need for greater communication and coordination between institutions,

¹ Enquête TOPO : Portrait des jeunes montréalais de 6ème année (Portrait of young Montrealers in the 6th grade [French only]) <http://bit.ly/DawsonFJ21>

“This study allowed us to identify different categories of Eastern Montreal food system map users. For example, we found that community organizations and neighborhood roundtables, which are Food Network partners, have used the map.”

-Anaëlle Lecorgne
Réseau alimentaire de l'Est de Montréal



Map of the food environment in Eastern Montreal.

community development corporations, and local groups and nonprofits. The food action network drew on a university-community partnership with Université du Québec à Montréal to better understand the food environment. The project mapped out all community food groups, restaurants, and food retail businesses and created an interactive, online version to engage its members in networking and collaboration. Usually, food system mapping is limited to existing databases and listings. However, in this case, a student evaluated each listing by checking and verifying them in person.

In line with this project, the Réseau alimentaire de l'Est was interested in assessing whether the online map was a useful and relevant tool for its members. The Dawson Food Justice Hub, which created its own online map spanning the island of Montreal, shared data, provided financial support, and gave feedback on the survey before the network disseminated and analyzed its responses.

Assessing the reach and relevance of an online map

Online maps such as that developed by the Réseau alimentaire de l'Est are created to geo-locate gardens, community groups, and food businesses. Multiple maps exist, some focusing on specific topics (like urban agriculture or emergency food services) and at various scales (single neighbourhood, multiple



Collective gardens in Eastern Montreal. Photos by Johanne Lussier (left) and the Réseau Alimentaire de L'Est de Montréal (right)

adjacent boroughs, or spanning the whole island of Montreal). However, there is little research on who, why and how these online maps are used.

The goal of this survey was to better understand whether and how the online map was used, and regroup profiles of users. The final tool, which is an online questionnaire, is divided into 19 questions. The sections include (1) a basic introduction of the respondent, including its food system categories (community group, supermarket, etc.), (2) an assessment on the current use of the online map, and (3) ideas for future and potential use of the map.

The main component of this survey is in section 2. Respondents are asked to indicate whether they know whether the map exists, how frequently they use it and if they consider it easily accessible and simple to use. The

choice of responses was formulated according to a gradient: “I do not agree at all” to “I completely agree”, “I never use the map” to “I use the map frequently”, etc. In this same section, respondents had to answer a multiple choice question to identify the reasons they used or didn't use the map, with an option to describe further and give examples.

The categories used in the introductory section enabled the community researcher to undertake a multiple correspondence analysis to identify patterns in the survey responses. In other words, responses were clustered into larger groups based on responses that presented the most similarities within a group and most dissimilar from other groups.

The last section of the online questionnaire is open-ended. It asks what information missing from the map is most valuable. Users might

be interested, for instance, in seeing if other organizations have premises or equipment available, how much food is being donated and the number of people accessing their services on a monthly basis. However, these data points can only be visible if they are made available by individual organizations. Therefore, the questionnaire asks whether respondents are willing to share information and update that data regularly.

Discussion

One of the initial assumptions of the Réseau alimentaire de l'Est was that their map was mainly used by community organizations, environmental groups and community development corporations. These groups comprised roughly 75% of respondents (n=39). Food businesses were less likely to answer the survey,

and were more likely to be unaware the map existed in the first place. Responses from food businesses (n=10) were only collected after additional outreach and explanation of the goals of the map and of the survey. Similar to efforts in other neighbourhoods during this project, there are challenges in engaging the private sector within community-based food systems.

The multiple correspondence analysis resulted in five clusters of answers. These clusters were presented along a continuum of engagement and use of the map. Each cluster comprises approximately 1 out of 5 respondents. On one extremity, a heterogeneous group (group 1) of users are unaware of the map and therefore do not use it. Similarly, group 2, which includes food businesses, may use the map out of curiosity, with no specific purpose in mind. At the other extremity (group 5), respondents use the map frequently (once a month) in order to locate sources of fruit and vegetables or to help them start a new initiative. More infrequent users (once per year) (group 4) are community organizations seeking food donations available on the territory. Finally, the middle group (group 3), comprises support-level organizations, who seek to better understand food availability and identify new partners. The clustering of answers was considered useful for the Réseau alimentaire de l'Est in order to align its mandate with the needs of its different members.

During the drafting of this survey, the Dawson Food Justice Hub and the Réseau alimentaire de l'Est discussed the limitations of online maps. The limitations can be technical, financial or communicative, including: the limited number of categories or layers that can be added at little or no cost, updating information that is temporary and subject to change, as well as limitations associated with data literacy and human resources. The third section of the survey indicated that users wished to know more about available premises (ex: kitchens, storage), transportation and material, and were even willing to share that information. However, other respondents were more reluctant in sharing data.

The tool survey would be useful for neighborhood, city-wide or regional networks already using or considering online mapping in the field of food security and agriculture. This online survey can help networks assess the goals, relevance and impact of online mapping tools from the perspective of its users. In turn, this tool can help networks make decisions on where they invest resources and set goals with online mapping tools, what data to collect and create partnerships with interested parties. ■

Find out more

Cartographie du système alimentaire de l'est de Montréal (Eastern Montreal's food system map [French only])

Online mapping requires multiple steps of data collection, categorization and visualization. This report provides an overview of the steps to create the online map of food availability across multiple boroughs in the east of Montreal.

<http://bit.ly/DawsonFJ22>

Enquête TOPO : Portrait des jeunes montréalais de 6ème année (TOPO Survey: Profiles of young montrealers attending 6th grade [French only])

Community food assessments can draw on multiple sources, including Statistics Canada and regional and provincial health organizations. This report provides comparative data between boroughs of healthy and unhealthy eating lifestyles among school children.

<http://bit.ly/DawsonFJ21>

Measuring the food environment in Canada

Community-university partnerships can be a way to conduct research that can be used for policy and program development. This report reviews existing food environment research in Canada and provides recommendations of study design and measurement strategies for future research.

<http://bit.ly/DawsonFJ2>

Open North

Are you interested in leveraging data management in food systems planning? Dataware is a project that aims to build the data literacy skills and knowledge of young people to empower them to address their communities' ability to access food in sufficient quantity and quality.

<https://opennorth.ca/publications#dataware-data-literacy-for-engaged-youth>

⑥ LaSalle Engaging with food store-owners from culturally diverse communities

Borough

Food retail

Survey

Mapping

Highlights

- LaSalle is a historically working class, highly industrialized, and isolated borough in the South-West of Montreal.
- Gentrification is leading to exclusion and disparities. The community partners determined that there is a need to assess how food retailers could engage underserved immigrant communities in the area.
- The Dawson Food Justice Hub worked with community partners to create a map of retailers and develop an interview guide for food retailers.
- These tools, especially the interview guide, could be modified by different community groups to engage independent food retailers servicing cultural communities in further advancing food security in underserved neighbourhoods.

Introduction

The borough of LaSalle is located in the south-west of Montreal. LaSalle's historic proximity to the Lachine canal, a waterway largely for commercial purposes until the 1950s, meant that it attracted a number of industries. Many factories eventually closed, although some remain today. Long administered as a separate municipality from the City of Montreal, LaSalle became a borough in 2002. Certain parts of LaSalle remain enclaved by highways, industrial centers, and train tracks, with public transportation being a limiting factor.

Economic disparities and poverty have been documented in LaSalle, pointing to the need for proper housing, education and job opportunities as well as safety and mobility issues. Furthermore, the territory is undergoing

significant socio-demographic changes with an increasingly aging and more culturally-diverse population. Following some city-led investments in social planning and community development of the Airlie-Bayne neighbourhood, researchers recommended that government intervention from federal and provincial was required to address LaSalle's social and economic disparities.¹

LaSalle's community roundtable, the Table de développement social de LaSalle, was revived in 2008 after a period of hiatus. The committee on food security also underwent similar cycles of engagement and disengagement. In 2017, an external consulting agency was mandated

¹ Klein, J.L. and Enríquez, D. (2012). Évaluation et accompagnement du projet animation de quartier. (Assessment and support of the neighbourhood activities project [French only]) CRISIS. URL: <http://bit.ly/DawsonFJ23>

to conduct an assessment of community services. The main organization that champions empowerment through food security is the NutriCentre LaSalle, but there are also a number of charitable and religious organizations that offer food donations although it isn't their main activity. Limited participation from residents, especially from cultural communities, have also been a limiting factor.

In the context of this project, the Dawson Food Justice Hub provided the Table de développement social de LaSalle with financial and institutional support.

Creating an interview guide for local food retail business owners

There is significant discussion and documentation in the food studies literature on the topic of cultural and racial inequities in the food system and in the community food sector. This includes, but is not limited to, the lack of services to racialized minorities and their absence from decision making spheres in local food planning efforts and, more broadly, the food movement. While more formal attempts

to reach religious organizations had been made in the past in LaSalle, they have lacked tangible outcome.

The coordinating committee worked with the Dawson Food Justice Hub to address the lack of participation of and services to low-income, immigrant populations.

The Nutri-Centre LaSalle acknowledged the need for more representation, participation, and partnerships to reach cultural minorities. The premise of this project was that small, independent retailers already serviced cultural communities in certain areas of LaSalle, and that greater collaboration with these businesses would help address food security in the borough.

During a brainstorming session, the scope of

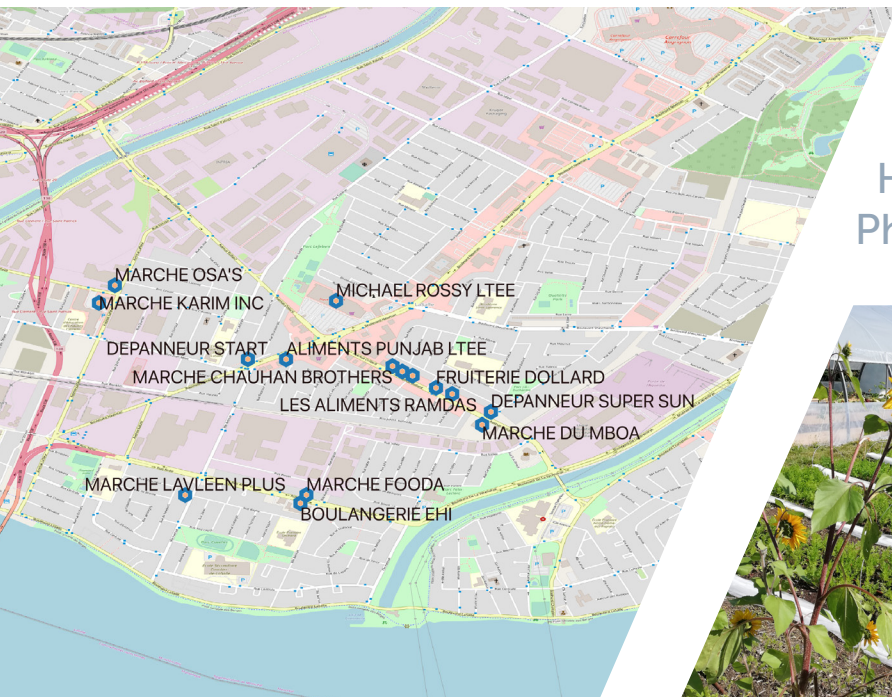
“We hope that these interviews will enable us to build relationships with local food business owners, and consequently to reach out to the vulnerable and isolated populations that visit these businesses regularly.”

-Projet en sécurité alimentaire de développement social de LaSalle

the project was narrowed down to engaging food retailers in immigrant-dense sectors of the neighbourhood, as potential vectors and allies to engage the broader community. Because the roundtable did not have capacity to hire a researcher, a researcher within the Dawson Food Hub was to lead the research project.

The current outputs of this project include an interview guide and a map of the neighbourhood. After consulting relevant research on immigrant-run food retailers, an interview questionnaire was drafted and improved on collaboratively.

The final interview guide, available in both French and English, has a total of 28 questions, and is separated into six sections: the background of the respondent and their busi-



Left: map of immigrant-run food retailers in LaSalle. Created by Karine Saboui for the Dawson Food Justice Hub. **Bottom: La Nutricentre Lasalle.** Photos by Nutricentre Lasalle



ness (sections 1 and 2), the characteristics of their clientele and their consumer habits (sections 3 and 4), the needs and barriers of the respondents and their store (section 5), and possibilities for leadership and networking in the neighbourhood (section 6). The estimated time to conduct an interview was 1 to 1:30 hours and a \$50 stipend would be provided to interviewees.

In order to sample 10 food retailers, community workers identified 3 underserved geographic sectors in the neighbourhood. A research assistant that specializes in GIS extracted retail

food businesses in LaSalle from a database consolidated in 2017 by the Dawson Food Justice Hub, to which she added socio-demographic census tract data from Stats Canada. A local economic development agency also became involved, and provided information on both new and closed stores absent from the existing listing. This helped to identify twenty or so food businesses in immigrant-dense parts of the neighbourhood and facilitated outreach to store owners, managers, or long-term employees (See map above).

A half-page sheet was prepared in English and

French to introduce potential interviewees to the project and provide details on monetary compensation for participation, and contact information for the researcher. These documents were given to merchants during the researcher's visit to their stores. Interviews were to be conducted in person, either during store hours or afterwards.

In early 2020, before the COVID-19 crisis, we prepared a guide and a preliminary list of businesses in three targeted areas. One interview was conducted when the project had to be stalled due to an unprecedented pub-

lic health crisis. In June 2020, the researcher resumed her outreach activities with store owners and employees by telephone, in the hope of conducting at least some interviews by telephone rather than in person.

Discussion

Discussions with the food security coordinator helped consolidate the mapping and interview guide into a process that would engage store owners, managers, or long-term employees into community based planning efforts. Specifically, interviewees would be serviced by being encouraged to meet with one another and be put in touch with economic development staff.

Once the interview data would be collected and analyzed, the team planned to present them with the map to all the actors involved in food security in LaSalle, including the people interviewed. Prior to the presentation, the planning committee would think about what to discuss with the invited guests. Reflection/discussion meetings would be organized on an ongoing basis to maintain stakeholder mobilization and foster new partnerships

These tools, especially the survey, can help neighbourhood food networks and local economic development agencies include under-

served communities in their programs. These tools, especially the survey, can serve as a guide to start conversations with employees, managers and owners of ethnic food retail stores in their areas. ■

Find out more

Agents of Change: How Immigrant-Run Ethnic Food Retailers Improve Food Environments

There is little research in Canada on the role of food retailers that serve and are managed by immigrant communities. This article draws on a pilot study in Buffalo, New York, to identify success factors to operate a healthy food retail store in a low-income environment, and how local governments can help.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/19320248.2015.1112759>

Racial Equity Tools

Have you considered undertaking an assessment of your workplace from the perspective of racial equity, inclusion and diversity ? Learn about equity-based practices when it comes to data collection.

<https://www.racialequitytools.org/evaluate/collecting-data/data-collection-methods#>

Outil d'autoévaluation des facteurs favorables à la création du lien de confiance avec les familles vivant en contexte de vulnérabilité (Self-assessment tool for factors facilitating the construction of trust with families living in vulnerable contexts [French only])

This self-assessment tool, originally developed in the context of supporting vulnerable families, is meant for different levels of a community organization to evaluate the level of trust with the communities they serve.

<http://bit.ly/DawsonFJ24>

Hochelaga Table (French only)

Youth engagement can involve interactive and creative methods. One youth-engagement project, called Hochelaga Table, used mapping to highlight where teenagers get their food, and how they envision their local food environment.

<http://hochelagatable.com/carte/ressources-proposees>

Lessons learned

Community-based research

- Every neighborhood is unique and different. This highlights the **importance of community-engaged research** which, by working with local partners, **responds to those differences and creates research that is useful for locals.**
- Existing **research methods were often more useful than the data they generated.** Often, community partners wanted to know something that was not available in the literature, however, certain tools such as surveys and management tools were already available, which were then adapted. Existing data from surveys and mapping, e.g. on a city-level, was often not as useful for community partners as previously thought. Instead, they used the tools and modified them for their own purposes. Further, because of the temporary nature of many research initiatives, data management can be intermittent and databases difficult to access. This highlights the need to **focus on sharing and generating tools** just as much as data itself, as these can be used more readily by community groups.
- Despite the differences between contexts, **the tools created can be read-**

ily adapted by other researchers and community groups. The tools can be especially useful for assessing internal operations, local food systems, users of existing tools, and more particular applications like working with food retailers.

- **Our approach filled a clear gap for community partners by addressing their specific needs, focusing on case-by-case support, and short-term goals.** The strategy of combining small amounts of funding with resources available to researchers (access to literature, databases, and time to host discussions) was a positive way to approach community-researcher partnerships, as community groups often lack funding, time, and knowledge of preceding research initiatives that could help them better determine their needs and capacities. Similarly, organizations often need someone to talk to, and benefit from networking and knowledge of city-wide efforts which researchers can provide.
- When local partners are given funding, resources, and time, they can come up with creative solutions. This highlights the **need for nimble community-engaged research with stable resources and funding.**

Local food systems

- When it comes to improving local food security, attention is often paid to food banks, gardens, and other community efforts. However, other stakeholders, such as food retailers and family-owned businesses are often neglected as part of the solution. **Many issues that shape food insecurity remain unaddressed by community organizations,** such as involving minorities, businesses, or local farmers.
- That said, food retailers were often much more difficult to engage with, survey, or find reliable databases on their locations.
- More generally, the barriers that communities face in improving local food systems may be more due to the administrative and public management systems that shape community organizations. For example, this could include funding sources or silos between municipalities.
- In Montreal, there is a growing awareness by decision-makers of the main issues of food insecurity, but much more remains to be done. Neighborhood food security networks are essential interlocutors. **Researchers can help to facilitate collaboration at local and regional levels.**

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